

Quincy, MASSACHUSETTS – July 30, 2014

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Special Meeting of the Quincy School Committee

A special meeting of the Quincy School Committee was held on Wednesday, July 30, 2014 in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. Present were Mayor Thomas Koch, Mr. Paul Bregoli, Mr. Noel DiBona, Ms. Barbara Isola, Mrs. Anne Mahoney, Mr. David McCarthy, and Mrs. Kathryn Hubley, Vice Chair.

Regular Meeting

Vice-Chair Presiding

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The Superintendent called the roll and all were present. Also present were: Dr. Richard DeCristofaro, Secretary; Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk; Deputy Superintendent Kevin Mulvey; Dr. John Franceschini; City Solicitor James Timmins; and Ms. Allison Cox, President, Quincy Education Association.

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There was a moment of silence for Mr. Joseph Doyle, custodian at the Lincoln Hancock Community School and Mrs. Charlaine Draicchio, mother of Director of Security and Transportation Michael Draicchio.

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Alexis Veith, Clifford Marshall parent, expressed concerned about Grade 5 students at Sterling and Point Webster. She asked for continued discussion about the achievement gap for students at these school and exploring options for restoring to elementary school status.

Open Forum

Courtney Perdios, Clifford Marshall parent, also spoke of concerns about Grade 5 students at Sterling and Point Webster. She wants to be sure of equal educational opportunities for all students in middle schools across Quincy.

Danielle Neil, also spoke about Grade 5 students at Sterling and Point Webster and expressed concerns about the achievement gap. She would like to see an elementary schedule for Grade 5 students.

Steve Perdios made suggestions to address space considerations, including creating a Kindergarten center and/or converting Point Webster to become a K-8 school and redistricting for a Grades K-5 Lincoln Hancock and 6-8 Sterling.

Luke Polley would like a universal grade for school transitions across the city. He feels this will make the city more attractive to families.

Dr. DeCristofaro reviewed that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has issued the Design Enrollment Certification for the new Sterling Middle School project. Dr. DeCristofaro met with the MSBA and they reviewed their methodology for enrollment certification; this recommendation is based on the enrollment that the MSBA feels confident we will grow to meet. Their methodology did not support the larger school proposed for Grades 4-8 at 550-600 students, but they are able to support a recommendation of a Grades 5-8 school for 430 students. This allows for 100 students per grade, plus continued housing of the citywide Special Education program currently residing at Sterling. A response is due to the MSBA within twenty-one days, so following tonight's discussion and vote, the signed document will be forwarded to the MSBA on Thursday, July 31.

Sterling Middle
School Design
Enrollment
Certification

In response to the Open Forum concerns expressed, Dr. DeCristofaro stated that both the Point Webster and Sterling Middle Schools are tremendous schools, filled with dedicated teachers, principals, and families. It is very simple to look at standardized test scores, but that is not the true measure of schools. Events are packed with parents, supporting the schools and the efforts of the teachers and administrators who work incredibly hard and care for the students and families. With School Committee support, Dr. DeCristofaro is looking forward to the day when 430 students and the staff will be housed in the new Sterling Middle School.

Mr. McCarthy thanked the parents for their input. Quincy Public Schools has been very lucky, new buildings for Quincy High School, Central Middle School, and now a new building for Sterling, which is way overdue. He thanked Superintendent DeCristofaro, the Leadership Team, Mayor Koch, and the School Committee for collaboration to make this project a reality. The MSBA does not make configuration decisions based on anything beyond enrollment, and while the bigger school would have given us more leeway in the future, we are grateful for the opportunities the new building will present. Mr. McCarthy believes that the neighborhoods of Quincy Point and West Quincy benefit from the two neighborhood middle schools.

Mr. McCarthy made a motion to execute the Massachusetts School Building Design Enrollment Certification for the Sterling Middle School for Grades 5-8, 430 students. Mayor Koch seconded the motion.

On the motion, Mr. Bregoli asked for clarification on how many students are currently at Sterling; 340 students, including 85 Grade 5 students. Mr. Bregoli asked for clarification on Title I services, Grade 5 students do not receive Title I services at any school.

Mrs. Mahoney reviewed enrollment figures, noting that we have issues and an obligation to address these issues. She is concerned with 5-8 and asked why did we not survey parents to find out their feelings. In the new building, is there an opportunity for Grade 5 students to be treated as elementary students. Mrs. Mahoney would like to present a resolution after the vote for a review of these major issues.

Ms. Isola said that analyzing student achievement is always at the forefront for School Committee. The Teaching and Learning Subcommittee is where the School Improvement Plans are presented annually and each principal presents the details and factors behind scores. Ms. Isola wanted to emphasize that this is a constant concern, how students achieve and it is an ongoing discussion throughout the year. Grade 5 students in middle schools will definitely be a topic for an upcoming meeting. As a parent volunteer on the Building Needs Committee in 1996-97, the importance of a new Sterling Building Committee was emphasized then, and is glad to hear this priority has come to the forefront.

Mr. DiBona said that in his conversations with parents, the Grades 4-8 configuration was not popular. Once the new Sterling Middle School is built, Open Enrollment will make this school a popular option but he continues to be concerned about the future. Grades K-4 will continue to have space issues across the city as the population grows. Mr. DiBona supports the motion, but wished the MSBA would have planned for bigger future configurations. In conversations with parents, it is clear that new school buildings attract students from private schools and that Quincy's family population is growing.

Mayor Koch thanked the parents for their input, incremental progress is being made throughout the school system to address the achievement gap. The role of the School Committee is to continue the discussion in further meetings. This is an amazing opportunity for the city; the School Committee, the City Council, the legislative delegation, the MSBA, and Treasurer Grossman have been phenomenal to work with. This is a wonderful opportunity for Quincy provided by the state, the joy in this decision should not be overshadowed by concerns. Mayor Koch also noted that under the Open Meeting law, a resolution should not be presented tonight, but should be on the agenda for the first meeting of the year.

Mr. Bregoli said that the School Committee will take under advisement the suggestions that were raised this evening, enrollment in K-4 is rising and there needs to be discussion about resolving these. He has faith in the School Committee's ability to resolve these issues, considering the parental input.

On a roll call vote, the ayes have it passed 7-0.

Mr. McCarthy asked about the reimbursement rate for the Sterling Middle School project, but we will not be notified of that until the Feasibility Study is complete.

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Mrs. Mahoney asked to make a resolution to address the major issues including concerns about Open Enrollment at the middle school level and the North Quincy High School campus expansion project.

Mayor Koch objected to the resolution and the resolution was tabled.

Dr. DeCristofaro left the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

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City Solicitor Timmins reviewed the process for appointing the new Central Middle School Principal, Rick DeCristofaro, Jr. School Committee must now make a determination for supervision, given that the conflict of interest has been publicly disclosed. Deputy Superintendent Kevin Mulvey recommended that he be designated as the supervisor of Central Middle School Rick DeCristofaro, Jr.

Central Middle School
Principal Supervision

Ms. Isola made a motion to appoint Deputy Superintendent Kevin Mulvey as the supervisor of Central Middle School Principal Rick DeCristofaro, Jr. Mr. McCarthy seconded the motion and on a roll call vote, the ayes have it 6-1. Mrs. Mahoney voted NO.

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Mayor Koch made a motion to adjourn for the evening at 8:13 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bregoli and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.

Adjournment